

REMARKS

The Office Action dated October 11, 2006 has been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims, and the following remarks, are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

Claims 1-3 have been amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-7 are currently pending in the application, but claims 4-7 have been withdrawn from consideration. Therefore, claims 1-3 are respectfully submitted for consideration.

As a preliminary matter, Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the courtesy extended in conducting the personal interview on January 4, 2006. The above amendments to the claims are consistent with the amendments discussed during the interview.

Claims 1-3 were objected to because of certain informalities. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the claims render the objections moot. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. The Office Action states that it is not clear which structural configurations of the heat exchanger are encompassed by the limitation "the at least one heat exchanger is configured to heat said intermediate fluid." Applicants respectfully submit that this rejection is rendered moot because claim 1 has been

amended to recite “the at least one heat exchanger is configured to transfer heat to said intermediate fluid.” Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Moss Maritime A.S. (WO 01/03793 A1, hereinafter Moss). The above rejection is respectfully traversed as the present claims recite subject matter which is neither disclosed nor suggested by Moss.

Claim 1, upon which claims 2 and 3 are dependent, recites an LNG carrier for transporting LNG from one location to another. The LNG carrier includes a vaporizer within an LNG carrier hull for vaporizing the LNG to a gaseous state, at least one heat exchanger outside of the LNG carrier hull, and at least one pump for circulating an intermediate fluid between said vaporizer and said heat exchanger. The at least one heat exchanger is configured to transfer heat to said intermediate fluid.

As a result of the claimed configuration, a self-contained LNG carrier is provided wherein liquid natural gas can be regasified either onshore or offshore, at each location at which LNG may be delivered. As will be discussed below, Applicants respectfully submit that Moss fails to disclose or suggest the claimed invention, and therefore fails to provide the features discussed above.

Moss discloses a device for the evaporation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) on board a vessel 1. The vessel 1 includes a control and metering device 2 for receiving LNG that is pumped from a supply ship and for discharging natural gas (NG) to the

consumer pipe network pipelines (Moss, page 2, lines 23-26). A line 3 extends from the control and metering device 2 to a tank 4 in which the LNG is stored. A pipe 5 leads from tank 4 to one end of a pipe device 6 which is immersed in the sea beneath the vessel 1, and which acts as a vaporizer. A pipe 7 leads from the other end of pipe 6 to a storage tank 8 for NG. A pipe 9 leads from storage tank 8 to the control and metering device 2. The vessel 1 may be moored by means of anchor chains 11, 12 which are connected to the vessel at location 13 (Moss, page 2, lines 28-38). A tubular shell 15 may enclose the pipe 6. A propeller 16 is provided at the end of the shell 15. By operating the propeller 16, seawater is forced through the casing 15 and around the pipe 6 in a direction towards the mooring cables 11, 12. As a result, the propeller 16 provides a current of warm sea water around the pipe 6 causing evaporation of LNG (Moss, page 3, lines 1-9).

Applicants respectfully submit that Moss fails to disclose or suggest all of the elements of the claims. As discussed during the interview, Applicants submit that Moss does not disclose or suggest a vaporizer within an LNG carrier hull for vaporizing the LNG to a gaseous state or at least one heat exchanger outside of the LNG carrier hull, as recited in the present claims. As mentioned above, Moss discloses a pipe device 6 which acts as a vaporizer and is immersed in the sea beneath the vessel 1 (Moss, page 2, lines 30-31). Therefore, Moss does not disclose or suggest a vaporizer within the LNG carrier hull and a heat exchanger outside of the hull.

Further, as discussed during the interview, Applicants submit that Moss does not disclose or suggest at least one pump for circulating an intermediate fluid between the

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vaporizer and the heat exchanger, as recited in claim 1. According to an embodiment of the claimed invention, an intermediate fluid, such as glycol or fresh water, is circulated by pump 22 through the submerged or partially submerged heat exchanger 21 and then the vaporizer 23. The heat exchanger 21 enables heat transfer from the surrounding sea water to the circulated intermediate fluid due to the temperature differential between the two. The intermediate fluid then circulates to the vaporizer 23. LNG is passed into the vaporizer 23 through line 24, where it is regasified and exits through line 25 (Specification, Paragraph 0041).

As discussed above, Moss only discloses that, by operating the propeller, a current of relatively warm sea water is forced around the pipe causing the evaporation of LNG inside. However, Moss does not disclose the use of an intermediate fluid, other than sea water or LNG, and consequently also fails to disclose a heat exchanger for heating such an intermediate fluid. Applicants respectfully submit that the sea water disclosed in Moss as heating the LNG via pipe 6 does not correspond to the intermediate fluid of the claimed invention.

For at least the reasons discussed above, Applicants respectfully submit that Moss fails to disclose or suggest all of the elements of claim 1. As such, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn.

Applicants note that claims 2 and 3 are dependent upon claim 1. Thus, claims 2 and 3 should be allowed for at least their dependence upon claim 1, and for the specific limitations recited therein.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited prior art fails to disclose or suggest all of the elements of the claimed invention. These distinctions are more than sufficient to render the claimed invention unanticipated and unobvious. It is therefore respectfully requested that all of claims 1-3 be allowed, and this application passed to issue.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicants' undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,



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